

LUNENBURG PLANNING BOARD

TOWN OF LUNENBURG

Emerick R. Bakaysa, Chair
Joanna L. Bilotta-Simeone, Vice-Chair
Thomas W. Bodkin, Jr., Clk.
Robert J. Saiia, Mbr.
Nathan J. Lockwood, Mbr.
Marion M. Benson, Planning Director



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Minutes
Information Meeting
MASS PV1, LLC, 651 Chase Road
October 24, 2011

Meeting Posted: Yes

Time: 6:30 PM

Place: Town Hall, 17 Main Street, Lunenburg, MA 01462

Present: Emerick R. Bakaysa, Chair, Joanna L. Bilotta, Vice Chair, Thomas W. Bodkin, Jr., Robert J. Saiia, Nathan J. Lockwood, Marion M. Benson, Planning Director

The Information Meeting opened with the Chair reading the legal notice advertised in the Sentinel & Enterprise, October 17, 2011. The Information Meeting was to hear and discuss an application for a Development Plan Review under Section 8.4. of the Protective Bylaw of the Town of Lunenburg for construction of a ground-mounted solar energy facility at 651 Chase Road.

The Applicant, MASS PV1, LLC was represented by Agustin Abalo Principal, and Robert Corning, Principal, Stantec Consulting. The project consists of solar panel arrays in three separate chain-link fenced areas on an approximately 110 acre site. Having three separate areas will avoid infringement on the wetlands. The three areas consist of eight, seventeen, and three acres; totaling 28 acres. Ingress/egress is off Chase Road. A maintenance shed consisting of a small office, restroom and storage will be located along the access road to the site for the persons that come on site for monitoring. Some work will be done within the buffer areas. The Applicant filed a Notice of Intent with the Conservation Commission and has received an Order of Conditions. A detention basin will be provided at each panel location. A pre-fabricated bridge structure will be installed at the location of the existing footbridge that crosses the intermittent stream that currently cuts through the site. Bridge will be 12 feet wide to support both construction vehicles and emergency vehicles. A UNITIL easement is located on site. Landscape screening will be provided to the abutters closest to the site along West Townsend Road with existing vegetation and supplemental plantings.

Ms. Benson noted the following additional comments from the September 28th Tech Meeting.

1. Twelve-foot gravel roadway (Fire, Police and DPW see no problem)
2. Gated entrance for each array area with lock boxes
3. Security cameras at each grid
4. Grid wiring underground
5. UNITIL – power line to tie into Chase Road
6. Monitoring 1-2 times per month
7. Signage
8. As Built required at completion

Ms. Bilotta-Simeone inquired as to how close were residential abutters. The nearest abutters on Chase Road are Central Mass Garden Center and a car dealership. The land to the north of the site is undeveloped. On the West Townsend Road side, a minimum of 50 feet of existing vegetation will remain on the site, in addition to whatever vegetation is already located on abutting property. The panels are low – three feet off the ground to a maximum height of seven feet.

Mr. Lockwood inquired as to site security. Security cameras will be remotely monitored. The Applicant will provide training to the Lunenburg Fire and Police Departments, and in the event of an incident, the Applicant can have persons quickly on site as they have other sites within Massachusetts.

Mr. Bakaysa inquired as to why no second ingress/egress on West Townsend Road in the event Chase Road inaccessible. Mr. Abalo noted that was so there would be no traffic impact for West Townsend Road. Neither the Fire Department nor the Reviewing Engineer had an issue with only one ingress/egress. There will be no "phasing" of the project; will be built all at once. The Applicant hopes to start prepping the site in spring 2012, with complete installation of the panel arrays by fall. Site has a State mandated 6 Megawatt cap.

Ms. Benson read review report of Marsden Engineering into record – as follows:

"The drainage was done using the latest computer modeling software. They also included the swale sizing and rip/rap sizing calculations to ensure there would not be a problem with overtopping or erosion.

The Stormwater form is complete and signed.

There is significant work within the wetlands buffer as such and Notice of Intent must be filed with the Lunenburg Conservation Commission. In addition, a stormwater pollution plan and Notice of Intent filed with the EPA.

Also, in accordance with Stormwater regulations, there needs to be a storm water prevention plan filed. The plan will provide schedules and details of the construction to better manage the inspection and construction of the site. It should not make any substantive changes to the plans or scope of work and as such, can be a condition of approval prior to start of work. As part of that plan the Planning Board should request a schedule of construction, phasing, stabilization methods and maximum areas to be unstable at any one time. There is a significant amount of area to be cleared, and as long as the procedures and the plan are well written there can be clear inspection criteria and thus, control of the site. This will prevent erosion or drainage issues on the site."

Reviewing Engineer Mr. Marsden noted that the installation of a bridge will be an asset to the Conservation Commission to limit the disturbance of the wetlands. He noted that a storm water prevention plan is necessary as it defines how the site will be taken care of during construction.

Mr. Saiia inquired as to the 100 Year flood. Mr. Marsden noted all drainage structures and swales have been sized for a 100 Year storm event, but there is no 100 Year flood plain on site.

Mr. Lockwood inquired as to how any damage to the panels would be handled. They will be resolved according to an Operation & Maintenance Plan. Equipment is not to be handled by the Fire, DPW or Police Departments. It is not flammable and only toxic if broken and ingested. Panels are self-maintaining during the winter months – elevated to allow for runoff. Production is monitored and if there is a falloff in production, e.g., snow-covered panels, someone will come on site to determine the reason. Applicant will own the site.

Mr. Bodkin inquired as to if the site "fails", e.g., due to economy, etc., what would happen? Mr. Abalo states that he has to post a Decommissioning Bond with the Town.

Mr. Bakaysa opened Information Meeting to public comments.

Walter Murray, 312 West Townsend Road- his daughter will soon be building on a lot to the rear of his property which is higher than the solar site and he is concerned about her view and if the panels emit any noise. Mr. Abalo noted there will be no future expansion of the three array areas. His response was inaudible regarding noise.

Mr. Saiia asked if radiation was emitted from the panels. None.

Heli Kokk, 552 West Townsend Road- asked about site lighting, construction timeline, and base for the panels. Only emergency lighting if someone has to go on site during the night and construction is expected to be within six months from start to finish. She also inquired as to the danger in the panels and if the Applicant had other similar sites in Massachusetts. Mr. Abalo noted the legislation passed in Massachusetts in 2009 and seven sites will be built in the state this summer. The technology has been around over 20 years and other states have much larger sites with no incidents. Panels will be built on the grass to aid in stormwater and reduce erosion.

Mr. Bakaysa wanted residents to be aware this is not the first solar array in Lunenburg – there is one located on the roof of the Turkey Hill Middle School.

John Whalen 526 West Townsend Road- What is the lifespan of the project? Twenty years. At that point, it will be decommissioned, disassembled and the site replanted if it is no longer viable to buy energy from that site. Mr. Whalen said he'll be able to see right into the site from his property during the winter months. He doesn't feel 50 feet of landscape screening is enough. He felt that the Planning Board was not watching out for the residents.

Mr. Bakaysa noted that under the Green Communities Act the developer has the right to develop the site with a solar farm. The Planning Board feels the amount of buffering is adequate. Mr. Bodkin noted that the solar farm will contribute to the mitigating of fossil fuels and supplement energy needs.

Mr. Abalo noted that "No Trespassing" signs will be posted; yet abutters are welcome to walk through the wooded area of the property.

Lil Murray, 312 West Townsend Road- felt the project could be closer to Chase Road; thereby, placing it further from the residences on West Townsend Road.

Walter Murray, 312 West Townsend Road- inquired as to where the panels will be connecting into UNITIL. Applicant currently has application with UNITIL for two options, 1) to tie into the power grid on site, or 2) tie in on Chase Road.

Heli Kokk, 552 West Townsend Road- Inquired as to whether applicant is renting or has purchased property. Purchased.

Baron Bowser, 512 West Townsend Road- noted he does not have a buffer on his property at the rear. Fifty feet of screening on the site is not enough.

Mr. Bakaysa noted that the Board has always been asked to work on what's in the best interest of the community, to bring commercial development to the community to broaden the tax base with minimal effect on the infrastructure. This project meets those needs.

John Whalen 526 West Townsend Road- Reiterated his dissatisfaction with amount of screening. Mr. Abalo responded that he would see if distance of landscape screening could possibly be increased 30-40 feet, depending on the results of a shading study to see how the panels would be affected.

Mr. Corning noted that under the Lunenburg Zoning Bylaw, they must conform to the 15 foot zoning setback. The Applicant did not feel this was adequate and provided almost 100 feet to the panels from the property line.

Mr. Lockwood inquired if the three smaller panels (approximately 1% of capacity according to Mr. Abalo) at the northwest corner of the 17 acre array area were removed, how would the project be affected? (Mr. Bowser abuts this corner.) Mr. Abalo responded that if the three panels were moved from the northwest corner, additional screening could be placed to bring the screening up to 150 feet. The three panels could possibly be relocated to the southern corner of the 17 acre array area.

Information meeting closed at 8:00 PM.

Audio and visual recording on file in the Planning Office